

Kuskokwim-Yukon Canal Possible

A study of the feasibility of connecting the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers by canal to make the rich resources of interior Alaska and the Yukon territory available to world markets through the port of Bethel was endorsed by unanimous vote of the house at Juneau recently.

The vote came on house joint resolution 75, sponsored by Rep. Milo H. Fritz, R-Anchorage, whose proposal for a ferry on the Yukon has already won wide support around the 49th state.

Rep. Fritz read to the house excerpts from a lengthy Wall Street Journal report of Feb. 19, indicating Japan is investing billions of its own capital to develop mineral and petroleum resources of Siberia, to be used in Japan. Rep. Fritz said Japan, which is already Alaska's best overseas customer, will divert some of that capital to interior Alaska if its resources are made available by such a canal.

"The Yukon has an estuary rather than a seaport at its mouth, but Bethel can take ships of 6,000 tons," the Anchorage lawmaker told the

house.

He said the corps of engineers has surveyed the route of 30 miles and installed a small tramway which has been used for decades for transporting small boats.

The land is mostly swamp-land and lakes, easy to remove, and the project probably would be economically feasible. Fritz said he has assurance from the corps of engineers that the job can be done, and he feels it would fit nicely into the entire NORTH project sponsored by the state administration for development of northern Alaska.

"Lt. Lavrenty Zagoskin of the Russian imperial navy made such a proposal before we bought Alaska," Fritz told the house. "His book foretells the development of this area."

Jalmar Kerttula, D-Palmer, house minority leader, spoke for the proposal, indicating bi-partisan support.

They contended Alaska may have more easily accessible timber, mineral and petroleum resources, available at lower cost, than Siberia's.